Andika

Andika is a sans-serif font designed for teaching people around the world to read. It is based on decades of legibility research, and, unlike other literacy fonts, includes extended alphabet support needed for many languages of Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Too often literacy specialists are required to use fonts for their educational programs that work against their purpose. This is because most fonts do not include the special letters required for many minority languages. Those that do may not be well-suited for teaching literacy. Andika seeks to bridge this gap.

Sans-serif letterforms, although preferred by many for literacy work, can actually hinder new readers because their simple forms are too similar from letter to letter. Some people have instead chosen to use serif fonts, such as SIL's Gentium or Charis designs for this reason. Andika avoids many of the pitfalls of most sans-serif designs, and adds high readability to simple forms.

Designers

Annie Olsen is a skilled calligrapher and tutor, and has a considerable interest in literacy. As part of her research in that area, she has compiled information on the preferred glyph design variants for teaching people to read the Latin alphabet.

Victor Gaultney holds an MA (with distinction) in Typeface Design from the University of Reading and has been involved with the design of type for minority scripts since 1991. He has won multiple international design awards for his typeface, Gentium, and trains and mentors other designers. His research interests include readability, legibility and the design of diacritics and extended Latin fonts.

Status

Andika Design Review was released on August 7, 2006. The purpose of the Design Review is to encourage literacy specialists and designers to review and test a basic version of the font before the design is finalized.

The first complete release of Andika, scheduled for 2008, will contain over 3,000 glyphs with complete OpenType, Graphite and AAT support. The Design Review only includes a small portion of these, and does not support smart diacritic positioning. The Design Review period will continue until January 31, 2007.

To find out more about the project, download the Design Review fonts, or give feedback to the designers, visit the Andika project site:

http://scripts.sil.org/andika

SIL International

Founded in 1934, SIL International is a non-profit, faith-based organization dedicated to assisting those who speak the world's lesser-known languages in attaining the necessary skills and capacity to develop their languages and preserve their cultural identities. As an international advocate for ethnolinguistic minority language groups, SIL works to facilitate language-based development through research, translation and literacy.

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SIL International
*Partners in
Language Development*

Andika
a typeface for global literacy

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Features

Andika has a wealth of features designed to maximize legibility and practicality.

ag ag

Both simple (primary) and complex (two-story) letterforms for a/g are included. The complex ones are to ease later transition to more traditional printed forms.

lo b ol d rn m

Some combinations of letters are naturally easy to be read as a single letter. Andika carefully distinguishes these combinations.

Ili

Letters that are commonly confused are designed to contrast with one another.

oadgq

Letter shapes are clearly differentiated to reduce letter confusion. The a/o are clearly distinct. Similar bowls are designed to be slightly different from one another.

ii ll yy tt qq

Alternative versions of many letters are included in order to accomodate different cultural or educational preferences. Users will eventually be able to choose which versions are used as the default for their situation.

fyj

Ascenders and descenders have clear curves to aid in letter recognition.

mnpr

Joins — where the stem attaches to other strokes — are low, as in handwriting. This is a known technique to aid legibility.

hnau

Emphasis is added to the beginning and end of strokes, similar to handwritten forms. This subtle enhancement gives clearer definition to the letters, and could be an aid to writing instruction. Note how the top left of h/n and bottom right of a/u are emphasized slightly.

ce ɔə

Open counters make letters appear larger. They also aid letter distinction, especially for alphabets that include extended Latin letterforms, such as 'turned' letters.

dăā

Diacritics are strong and clear. Unlike most sans serif fonts, Andika has high ascenders that allow room for these accents. Multiple marks can be stacked without them being misread as belonging to the line above.

Full support for all extended Latin and Cyrillic ranges of Unicode will be included. This will enable the font to be used for any language written using these scripts, even minority languages that are poorly supported by commercial software. It will also be fully compatible with SIL's other Roman fonts: Doulos, Charis and Gentium.

The letterforms are simple, almost monoline, and easy to copy with pencil or chalk.

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